

Date: November 14, 2023

To: PPS Board of Education

From: Roger Kirchner, CBRC Co-chair
Mariah Hudson, CBRC Co-chair

Dear PPS Board of Directors,

As members of the 2023-24 PPS Community Budget Review Committee (CBRC), we are writing to you to provide advisory support as you re-evaluate budgetary priorities as you negotiate current and future contract settlements with the valued employees of PPS. The intent of this letter is to support you by offering again some key observations and recommendations this committee offered in our [Annual Budget Review for the 23-24 School Year](#). We will also share key observations we made in regards to the Proposed Budget Amendment at our September 12, 2023 meeting with Chief Garcia as reflected in this [memo](#) drafted by PPS staff. Our committee's primary goal continues to be to support your work through thoughtful review of the budget. Through our ongoing review and evaluation process we aim to support your efforts to provide all students equitable access to the quality education needed to realize the Graduate Portrait and meet the board's goals of eliminating racial disparities in academic achievement in the four areas of 3rd grade Reading, 5th grade Math, 8th grade readiness and High School graduation.

To begin, we would like to reiterate our observation that state funding remains inadequate for supporting the Quality Education Model, but recognizes this is the budgetary climate we are working in and, as such, must balance. As previously stated in our Annual Budget Review for the 23-24 School Year, "we recommend that PPS and all PPS supporters continue to advocate for protecting and increasing the K-12 budget for Oregon school districts to achieve the Quality Education Model (QEM)." We recognize and appreciate the support you have recently received from the State CFO to clarify the resources available to the district now. We welcome continued active engagement and collaboration from the state government to attain the goal of funding PPS schools at the state's own Quality Education Model.

We would also like to restate our observation that "even with Student Success Act investments many class sizes remain unacceptably high" and our recommendation that "additional State funding should be used to increase student-facing direct service positions, including making strategic reductions to class size in schools and grade-levels or subjects that demonstrate the greatest need for additional direct service support, which could accelerate the attainment of the board goals to reduce and eliminate persistent racial disparities in academic achievement across the K-12 continuum."

Recently, PPS has shared publicly that cuts to the current school year budget will need to be made to support its contract proposals offered to the Portland Association of Teachers. We understand that the district is currently in contract negotiations with two other bargaining units, PFSP and SEIU, which will likely require additional budget reallocation.

CBRC recommendations

Recognizing that changes in state funding are most likely not forthcoming and that substantial contractual increases with unions would require a considerable reallocation of resources, we thought it prudent to reiterate, as members of the PPS community tasked with providing accountability and oversight, our recommendations regarding budgetary spending.

Foremost of these are the recommendations to maintain FTE for direct service and instruction to students and to address existing and future maintenance needs in our schools.

As stated in our Annual Budget Review, we continue to recommend that this board:

- Analyze spending on positions that are not student-facing as a first step, as well as a thorough analysis of contracts for services that may be redundant to work assigned to district-funded positions.
- Reconsider any proposals for contracts to support central office functions, including but not limited to contracts for aligning the instructional framework or other initiatives that are part of the district's strategic plan.
- Analyze all investments in indirect (not student-facing) services including training, should preclude any further cuts to direct service, student-facing positions.
- Analyze and address maintenance needs more aggressively and develop a long term plan to implement building upgrades.

We wish to note that CBRC has expressed concern related to enrollment trends that “additional (and one time) funding sources are hiding the looming shortfall due to ongoing enrollment declines from the general public.” Our recommendation is for the board to consider proactive steps to maintain direct service instructional FTE amidst declining enrollment and funds. The committee will request high level information from staff on how PPS intends to address the likely need for funds for such contractual increases related to collective bargaining in light of enrollment and budget trends to inform our recommendations. The themes which we have highlighted here are consistent with the board's goals and long term support for the success of PPS students.

Thank you for your time and attention to our recommendations and observations. We hope they are helpful in your deliberations on budgetary adjustments you may need to make in the coming school year as you work through labor negotiations. We intend this letter to be taken as another piece of guidance as we fulfill our mission and purpose as your advisory committee to “review, evaluate, and make recommendations to the Board of Education (Board) regarding the Superintendent's Proposed Budget and other budgetary issues identified by the CBRC or the Board.” Please reach out to our committee for any questions or further support as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

CBRC Members:

Roger Kirchner, Co-chair

Mariah Hudson, Co-chair